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French policeman kills fan in post-match racist violence

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A French police officer has shot and killed a Paris-Saint Germain football fan amid apparently racist violence that followed the team's defeat by the Israeli side Hapoel Tel-Aviv.

The unnamed policeman, who was in custody Friday morning, fired his handgun into a threatening crowd near the Parc des Princes stadium late Thursday after seeking to defend an Israeli fan from attack, police and witnesses said Friday.

A 24 year-old man was killed and a 26 year-old who was wounded is in serious condition in hospital.

Five fans were in police custody Friday morning and face possible charges for "racist and anti-Semitic insults", police said.

"(The officer) fired in legitimate self-defense in order to protect his physical person. He had come to the aid of a man in accordance with our rules of engagement, and he had no choice but to shoot," said Patrice Ribeiro of the Synergie police union.

"A fan asked for help, and this Caribbean colleague of ours came to his assistance. He took refuge in a McDonald's restaurant and saw this horde of savages come at him," said Joaquin Masanet of the UNSA-police union.

"I am sorry that there is a dead PSG fan but one has to say that these people are racists who attacked a police officer because he was a man of colour," he said.

Fans interviewed on French radio said the officer was not wearing an identifying arm-band and fired his gun in panic.

A hard core of PSG supporters is known for its far-right allegiance, and several have been banned from the club's matches. Thursday night's violence followed a humiliating 4-2 defeat for the French side.

Philippe Broussard, a journalist at L'Express magazine specialising in football violence, witnessed the events and described what happened on the publication's website.

"At around 10:55 pm when I arrived at Porte de Saint-Cloud metro station the first incidents erupted. Several hundred Paris supporters, mostly very young, were looking to attack opposing fans," he wrote.

Broussard saw a crowd turn its attention to a "black man of about 30, quite tall, wearing a beige woollen sweater. He has a tear gas grenade in his hand and is facing a crowd that is increasingly hostile. He is apparently trying to protect someone ... and keeps saying 'Stay behind me.'"

The man sought to take refuge in a McDonald's restaurant "to avoid being lynched." Outside the restaurant, "there is a movement of the crowd as if the 'fugitive' has been caught by his attackers ... Several people shout, 'He's got a gun,' and then suddenly a shot rings out," Broussard wrote.

When they realised the man was a police officer, several in the crowd began chanting, "Dirty n*gger" and "France for the French." according to Broussard's account.

"Only one thing is sure: several dozen people were rushing towards him and wanted to attack him because of the colour of his skin," Broussard wrote.

Police reinforcements arrived after several minutes, by which time all the windows of the McDonald's had been smashed.

French Sports Minister Jean-Francois Lamour condemned the violence. "Such incidents are unacceptable and damage the image of sport," he said.

"Even if the circumstances remain unclear, the fact is that ... a man is dead. Football is not hate. Football should not mean war," said Frederic Thiriez,

president of the French Professional Football League.

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